MEMORIAL

OF

S. C. LEAKIN, AND OTHERS,

CONSTITUTING

THE GRAND JURY FOR BALTIMORE CITY,

RESPECTING PROVISION FOR THE

INSANE POOR.

MEMORIAL.

To the Honorable the General Assembly of Maryland:

Among the subjects of public importance which have been regarded as legitimately within the sphere of investigation of the City Grand Jury, now in session, none has appeared clothed with more touching interest than the condition of the insane poor, who are suffering under the evils accruing from the absence of suitable and sufficient provision for their state of destitution and melancholy disease. This is a subject which naturally and eloquently appeals to every heart. A single reference to the wants of such of our citizens as are dependent upon public charity because deprived of reason, is enough to interest every philanthropist in an effort to have all insane poor persons supplied with the means best promotive of their cure. As no distinct asylum has been provided by the State for the objects of public charity from mental disease, they are usually sent to the county alms-houses where little, if any opportunity can be afforded of so modifying the moral and physical treatment as to render it appropriate to each case, and best calculated to give relief. The facts and statements presented in the special report of the lunatic department of the Baltimore alms-house, recently laid before the Board of Trustees by one of the attending physicians, are well fitted to diffuseadditional sympathy in the fate of the unfortunate subjects of insanity and want. Under the influence of such sympathy, and ardently desirous to aid in pressing their claims upon the Legislature, we resolved to visit the alms-house in our official capacity; and by personal observation to comprehend more fully the condition and the wants of the seventy-six lunatics confined there. The Jury accordingly visited the alms-house on Wednesday, the 17th of the present month, and were politely afforded every facility by the gentlemen of the Board of Trustees in examining its various departments, and internal arrangement and management. We were gratified with the arrangement and appearance of the house, as a general asylum for the poor, and regard the present condition of the establishment as evincing attention, capability and energy on the part of its officers and trustees. The *insane department* however was the subject of our more special examination. The comfort of the lunatics has been

promoted, we think, as far as practicable. Yet no one can deny that the insane department contrasted with every other portion of the institution, is calculated to excite most painful impressions in all minds that are acquainted with the modern (and we may say the only truly human and successful) mode of treating insanity. The architectural unfitness of the building for any judicious classification or management of insane persons, discourages the hopes which the physician and friends of the sufferer might otherwise indulge.

So impressed are the members of the Grand Jury with the humanity, good policy, and urgent necessity of the State's affording her insane poor the best possible chances of cure, and that this can be effected only by having them placed in an early stage of the disease in a well provided lunatic asylum, that we conceive it to be our duty thus to memorialize your honorable body in behalf of the subjects of combined insanity and penury, praying you to provide a State pauper-lunatic asylum at the earliest practicable moment, which shall prove not only a home, but a fountain of comfort and health to its afflicted occupants.

The nature and wants of insanity are so generally known at the present day, that in advocating an asylum for our insane poor, we need not bring to our support detailed facts or labored arguments. We shall merely refer to the following succinct statements It is supposed, from the late census and other data, that the number of insane at public charge in this State, exclusive of idiots, is in the neighborhood of one hundred and fifty, (150,) nearly all of whom are to be found in the Alms-Houses and Jails of the State for safe keeping, where their cure is found to form the exception, instead of the rule.

Throwing the Jails (as they should be,) entirely out of the question, the arrangements of our Alms-Houses do not admit of the particular attentions and mode of treatment, nor do they supply the class of nurses, necessary for the insane. From the confinement of more than one insane person in the same cell, even lives have been lost, both in this and in other States; under circumstances which relieved the attendants and officers of all blame. Experience proves, on the other hand, that even amidst the comforts of home and the attentions of friends, the chances of cure are slight, compared with those afforded by a well arranged asylum.

The long and too general neglect of the insane, has sprung, in a great degree, from the false idea entertained of the incurability of their affliction. Insanity is now proved, however, by the very highest authority, to be one of the most manageable diseases, if subjected to a suitable medical and moral discipline at an early stage of its progress. According to the latest and best writers, the ratio of curability of cases which have existed less than *three months*, is *nine in ten*; and eight and a half in ten, where it has ex-

isted less than a year. The probability of cure so rapidly diminishes, however, with the increased duration of the disease, that when it has continued for a period *over three years*, scarcely *one in thirty* are said to recover. This forcibly shows the importance of a State institution, where the insane paupers can be placed at an early period of their attack, with the chances of 90 per cent. in favor of ther restoration,and consequently of their requiring the support of the public for only a short period. In any other situation, all attempts at cure are necessarily imperfect, and the disease generally continues. In the lapse of time the discomfort of crowded apartments; the various forms of personal restraint necessarily adopted, the want of exercise, amusement and occupation—a condition of things as well fitted to induce insanity in a healthy individual, as it is to render it perpetual when once manifested, goad the morbid and sensitive mind of the patient to constant excitement. This finally induces organic change, and permanent fatuity ensues, making the pecuniary aid of the public necessary for the individual (and perhaps for his family,) for the balance of his life. *Economy*, therefore, as well as *humanity*, pleads in behalf of our lunatic paupers.

The duration of the confinement of the insane patients, now in the Baltimore Alms-House, as stated in the recent report of Dr. Robinson, varies *from one, to twenty years.*

The number confined less than one year, is	31
From one to five years,	34
From five to ten years,	8
From ten to twenty years,	3
In all amounting to	76

The annual charge of these paupers, is estimated at about fifty dollars, and many of them will probably continue for years to be supported at the public expense; for their insanity having been allowed to fix itself upon them, may continue as long as they live. If these patients had been placed at an early period, in an appropriate asylum, it is fair to infer, from the results in similar institutions in this country and in Europe, that *eight in ten* of them might have been restored, after an average confinement of from *nineteen to twenty-four weeks*. It is thefore evident, that the saving in mere dollars and cents to our City, (and the reasoning applies equally to every county in the State,) would be very considerable, by a reasonable attention to subjecting all cases of insanity in their early stages, to an auspicious medical, moral, and physical treatment. In addition to the above views, we must not lose sight of the fact of the certain amelioration of almost all incurable cases, by pursuing kind and judicious treatment: and that their capacities may be so directed as to contribute to their individual support, simultaneously with the improvement of their health and condition.

We fervently hope, that while so many of our sister States have extended, or are preparing to extend ample protection to their insane poor, the Legislature of Maryland, will not disregard the paramount claims of this class of our fellow citizens, who urgently call upon their constitutional guardians for assistance, and for deliverance from their desolate abodes in the jails and alms-houses throughout the State. "A single year's delay will necessarily diminish the chances of recovery of numbers, and prove fatal to the hope of restoration of many." No proposition, we believe, could be presented to you, which would meet with the more unanimous good wishes of all classes of our people. No one among us knows but that the benefits of an assylum for the insane poor, may be unexpectedly shed at some future day, on some one within the enlarging circle of his own relations or friends.

We therefore unanimously, and most respectfully urge you, to unite in providing the desired asylum for the insane poor of the State. We advocate it on the ground of its *humanity*, to the most afflicted of mankind; its *economy*, as proved by the experience of of our sister States; its *popularity*, as promotive of public good, and individual happiness; and its necessity, under every view of the case. Finally, the honor of our State demands it. "Such an institution, assuming a high rank among our State enterprises, would prove a blessing to a helpless, and heretofore, neglected class of our people, and continue an admired monument of her benevolence.

S. C. Leakin, Foreman,
Wm. Pinkney,
Thomas Wildey,
Wm. P. Stewart,
Peeter Bargar,
Francis Burns,
Thos. Carroll,
Alex'r. Gould,
James Blair,
J. Zimmerman,
Henry Brice,
J. S. Shriver,
Rezin Wight, (from report,)
Philip Euhler,
Wm. Ball, jr.
James Corner,
William Jackson,
Jacob Smith,
Robert Garrett,
Robt. Graves,
Simeon Alden.